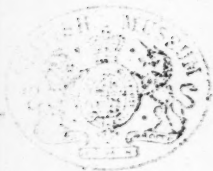


Pam 95 3

Dr. *VERNEY*'s
S E R M O N
Before the
Q U E E N.



A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
Q U E E N,

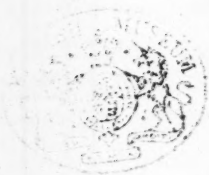
At St. J A M E S's Chapel,
On *Novemb.* the 25th. 1705.

By the Honourable
G E O R G E V E R N E Y, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to Her M A J E S T Y.

Publiſh'd by Her Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N :

Printed for A. and J. Churchil, at the *Black-Swan*
in *Paternoster-Row*, 1705.



I

A
SERMON
Preached before the
QUEEN.

JOB ii. 10.

*What? shall we receive Good at the
hands of God, and shall we not receive
Evil?*

THIS Book is a Treatise concerning
Providence, founded on the History
of Holy Job's Life, and illustrated by
those several remarkable Occurrences, which, by
the exprefs Permission of God, befel him so sur-
prizingly;

A Sermon Preached

prizingly ; together with his Behaviour, and Arguments, and Reflections thereupon : So that scarce any great Circumstance of Life, especially on the afflicting side, can happen to us, for which we may not find proper and suitable Meditations in this Divine Discourse. And the Text is his *Apology* for God, under those Calamities, which tempted the Partner of his Life to blaspheme : *Shall we receive Good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive Evil ?*

From which Words the Principal thing suggested, and, which indeed is the chief Subject of this whole *Book of Job*, is, *That God is the sovereign Disposer of all things, superintending in an especial manner all Events befalling Humane Life* : So that whatever our Portion in this World may be, whether Uniform or Various, Prosperous or Adverse ; by what means soever, Secret or Visible, Casual or Certain, Just or Impious any thing befalls us, 'tis in every case equally govern'd by God ; we receive our *Evil Things* from the same Divine Hand, from which we receive our *Good Things* : insomuch that our present Fortunes are in God's Hands entirely , and in his alone.

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This I shall not endeavour to prove; it being a first Principle in Religion, which ought always to be suppos'd; because indeed there is nothing in its kind more clear than it self, by which it may be prov'd. Besides, this is so essentially necessary to all Religion, that St. Paul affirms it to be utterly impossible to please God without a firm Persuasion of it. For, as the *Apostle* argues upon this Subject, He that comes to God, must believe that he Is, and that he is a Rewarder of those that diligently seek him; dispensing Good and Evil in the Exercise of his Providence, as he sees it needful and convenient for Men.

And indeed, without the Comfort of this Assurance, that we are under the vigilant and indulgent Providence of God; that his Infinite Justice, and Wisdom, and Goodness, are concern'd in every Event that befalls us; Humane Life were indeed, what Holy *Job*, in his elevated Passion, elegantly represents it in the Chapter following my Text, when he was under that extraordinary Trial of being deserted by Providence. For from the Moment God withdrew his protecting Hand, Lo the Issue! Malice

lice and Accident, Heaven and Earth, Wicked Men and Devils, all spring in upon the abandon'd, expos'd Derelict: Insomuch that he, who was the greatest Person in the East, whilst *Providence* shin'd on him, became instantly the most forelorn in the whole Creation, so far, and as to those Circumstances, to which God expos'd him, but no farther; for there is no Power, but by Commission from the Almighty Patron of Mankind.

It pleas'd God, therefore, to give the World an early experimental Proof in the Person of *Job*, of the Impotency of our Frame and Fortune, of the active Malice of our Enemy; and from both, of our constant and entire Dependance on the Divine Protection. But then it pleas'd him to set his Seal on the *Soul* of Holy *Job*, that the destructive Angel might not approach him there; and this out of mysterious Goodness too, to teach us, that our Innocence is as much from the Influx of his Grace, as our Prosperity is from the Benediction of his Providence: but chiefly to instruct us, that Piety and Virtue are more valuable with him, more essential to us, than all outward things, nay, than this present Life it self; and that we may
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be most dear to God, even when he has appointed us to be poor, and naked, and despicable to the World. And therefore, though the Sovereign Lord of all Things was pleas'd to expose the Person and Fortunes of Holy *Job*, yet was it under such Provident and kind Restrictions, as in the Event were rightly profitable for himself, and of standing Instruction to all succeeding Ages of Men. For though the Devil was allow'd to raise a Tempest against his House, yet was he not permitted to discompose his Mind; though he readily instigated the wild *Sabeans* to spoil him of his Substance, yet could he not possibly rob him of his *Integrity*; nay, though he penetrated his Skin, and poison'd his Blood; touch'd his very *Bone* and his *Flesh*, yet could he not blast his Soul, or infuse one infectious Thought into him: his Faith, his Innocence, being too sacred with God, too essential to himself, to be in the least devoted to the Enemy.

From whence he pleased to observe, *That God will never desert us in the main point, in things that relate to our Eternal Interest, as long as we desire to adhere to him, however he may please to dispose of us in Matters of less Consequence and Moment.*

B

From

From all which general Circumstances, be pleas'd in the first place to consider :

I. What Affections of Duty, what Publick Acknowledgments, what Habitual Gratitude becomes you all to the Providence of God, for that he has made, and preserved his Sacred Fence about you, and about your Houses, and about all that you have on every side: More particularly, that he has not hearken'd to the Devil, remonstrating all this against you, as if your Piety were Mercenary and False, and therefore importunately begging, that he may put you to the Test and Trial, in malicious Confidence, that you would curse God to his Face, should he once put forth his Hand against you, as he is expressly represented to have done in the Instance of my Text, and doubtless he is the same implacable Enemy to Mankind, he ever was; going to and fro over the Face of the whole Earth, traducing Innocence, and seeking to devour what Providence has any-ways expos'd.

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Your Obligations to *Providence* are immensely great, as he is the Original and free Donor of all the good things he hath *given you so richly to enjoy*. But then, as he is your constant *Preserver*, upholding you in Life, guarding you from Accidents, protecting you from the Enemy, here the principal Sum multiplies with Interest of Love and Duty, Moment by Moment, beyond Measure : a Debt which should cloath you with unfeigned Humility, and prostrate you before the Great God, lower than the lowest of the Earth ; for as much as your Receipts have been infinitely more, and greater than theirs : For to his Providence alone it is, you owe all that you ever have been, all that you are, and all that, through the Indulgence of his constant Mercy, you may seasonable hope to be, You and Yours.

II. Be pleased, in the second place, to reflect, how much it imports you to *retain your Integrity* : For this is that one Tenure, by which you hold all that you enjoy ; hold it (I mean) as a Blessing : For if the Extravagance of importunate Designs have, as it were, extorted this Ample Provision from *Providence*, as is represented by our Saviour, in the Character and Fortune of

the Wild Youth in the Gospel ; reflect, I beseech you, what will be the issue of having receiv'd your *Good Things* upon that Foot : from which unhappy Circumstances nothing can possibly retrieve you, but the bethinking your selves, and returning to our Gracious Father ; with that severe Conviction, that Humility, that affectionate and dutiful Purpose of Heart, there describ'd in the close of that Parable ; and then infinitely happy would be the Issue of a Scene so ill begun : But then reflect withal, that this, at best, is but the Wisdom of Repentance ; and is entirely owing to the Patience of God and his Discipline, upon our own Folly ; which cannot be without some Reproach on our side for the present, tho' it will be hereafter the eternal Reason of our Duty and Gratitude, that so much has been forgiven.

Let me therefore prevail with you, that as you are in the Circumstances, so you would affect the best part of the Character of the Elder Brother ; which is, *to be ever with our Father*, whose is *All Yours*, in Present and Reversion, provided it be your faithful Desire, and steady Purpose to live under the Oeconomy of his Family, committing implicitly your entire All,
Soul.

Soul and Body, and Fortüne, All that you are, or ever wish to be, to the Protection, the Conduct, and Provision of his Family, as in Duty and Interest becomes so near and sacred a Relation.

Be steady therefore, to Holy *Job's* good Resolution, to hold fast your *Righteousness*, not to let that go upon any reason, or in any exigence of Life whatever; that your Heart may not reproach you, so long as you live, tho' the World should cast Misconstructions on you, as it did on him for any seeming turn of Providence towards you: for this is that One Resolution only, that can bless and sanctify every Condition of Life possible; that can turn that dangerous State of settled Prosperity into daily opportunities of doing Glory to God, present Good to Men, and to your selves Eternal Good: that can support you, as it did the invincible *Job*, under the Test and Tryal, whenever it shall please God to call you to it; that can enable you to enjoy the Comfort of his Favour, even when it shall please Him, that there should remain to you scarce any thing else to enjoy. Nay, and it is this that can in any wise retrieve your Affairs with God, either as to this Life, or the next; as, for our Faith and Comfort, was
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exemplify'd in the Instance before us ; who, tho' he was so deeply Afflicted, so unfortunate in appearance ; yet as a visible Reward of, and Attestation to his Integrity, he dies the *greatest Man in the East*. And may the Grace of God, in like manner, bless every Condition of Life to you, that whatever Evils may be thought proper for any of you, you may so receive them at his Hands, that they may be real Instances of his present Care, and Pledges of his future Favours : and that the good things which, from time to time, shall be committed to you, may, by the Benediction of his Holy Spirit upon your own Piety and Virtue, receive the Improvement and the Reward, represented by the ten Talents, and the ten Cities in the Parable.

III. Be pleased 3^{dly}, to reflect, that since our Fortunes are so entirely in God's Hands, how becoming, how just, how necessary daily Devotion is ; that our Prayers may keep pace with our Wants, our Acknowledgements with our Obligations. For 'tis for this Reason chiefly, that God chuses this way of Subsisting us *Day by Day*, rather than that of instating us in a lasting and settled Provision ; that we might *ever be with our Father* ; looking up to him, expressing
our

our Duty and Dependance, and receiving back fresh Pledges of his Paternal Care towards us. To be remiss therefore, or formal in this Duty, is, so far forth, to *live without God in the World*. 'Tis to be absent from him ; to be as it were, dismiss his Family ; to be deliver'd up to the free Possession of our own Fortune and Will, as hopeless' irreclaimable Desperates : a State of the greatest Opposition possible our Eternal Safety and Interest ; a Temper of Mind of the utmost Irreligion, next to profess Atheism.

And as our Fortunes being in God's Hand, is a just Reason, why we should constantly apply our selves to him ; so is it equally a Reason why we should not use any indirect or sinful Means, for the altering or enlarging them : because this is likewise to cast off Providence, and to carve for our selves. This, in the Sense of our Saviour's Parable, is to sue out our Fortune, that we may be our own Men ; not childishly to depend on his precarious Goodness. And this we may assure our selves, that whatever we are permitted thus impiously to wrest out of God's Hand, he is no Unconcern'd Spectator of : we receive it, not as a Blessing for our present Use, but as a Debt for our future Account ; for the utmost
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Farthing of which we shall be strictly answerable at the last Day. God is pleas'd indeed sometimes to prove us for the present, by indulging our importunate Follies; but then if his Goodness lead us not at last to a better Mind, he will withal, send Eternal Leanness into our Souls.

IV. Since God is pleas'd to exercise such a watchful *Providence* over us, it should be the real Comfort, as it is the only Security of our Lives, that we are in his Hands. We should not be desirous, we should not presume to trust our own Wishes; but rather wait upon him, both for his Manner, and Time, and actual Choice for us. And this is properly to receive every thing at his Hands.

And certainly Humane Life would be a most insuperable Terror to a thoughtful Person, under the natural Consciousness of our own exceeding nice and tender Frame, the Injudiciousness of our own wild Desires, the implacable Hatred of the Common Enemy, the uncertain and dark Issues of casual Causes, productive of innumerable unforeseen irresistible Events; were there not an infinitely wise, and powerful,

ful, and vigilant, and good Providence to support our fleeting Life, to guide our wandring Desires, to chain up the Destroyer, and to lead us steadily through all the Mazes of seeming Fortune: For what a timorous abject State would Humane Life be, under these just and reasonable Jealousies and Fears, did we not *live, and move, and have our Being*, under the constant Protection of God? There is no Thought therefore can support us in this ungovernable State of Things, but that we are in the Hands of God; upholding us in Life, and dispensing to us, whatever he pleases should befall us. So that 'tis not the Duty only, that we should, but moreover the Happiness of our present State, that we may *live by Faith*, taking every thing upon Content; that, that which is, is upon all accounts truly the best. If therefore we would be *wise for our selves*, consulting the Ease and Security of Life, we should not be over-solicitous, but rather live upon present Things; complying with the Condition, submitting to the Duties, which every State brings along with it; not reflecting disconsolately on what has been, nor anxiously on what we fancy might probably have been; but piously and wisely on what

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actually is; taking Humane Life with its present Circumstances, as it is offer'd day by day.

This blessed happy Temper, as it is suitable to the Principles we avow, the Faith we profess, and the Prayers we daily offer up to Heaven; so would it lead us to all the Duties we owe to Providence, conducting us thro' all the various Scenes of Life, with a steady and right Sense of things, with calm and equal Passions, an uniform and suitable Behaviour; so as to be always the same pious, compos'd, resign'd, happy Persons, in a fleeting uncertain State of Things.

Oh! the Felicity of such a Condition, that has the Steadiness of God for the Regulator of its Passions, the Goodness of God, for the Spring and Supply of its Desires, and the Wisdom of God for the Director of its Choice.

What other thing possible can such an One either implicitly wish, or actually chuse, than whatever shall be absolutely the best for him? since he composes himself to enjoy that alone, which the unerring Hand of God has prepar'd and set before him.

V. Be

V. Be pleased to consider, that since God is the Sovereign Disposer of all Things, we should refer all Events to him.

To exercise our Faculties, to improve our Talents, to fill up our time with useful Employments, to watch Occasions besitting Virtue, or such towards which Providence may seem to point in the civil parts of Life; this is our Province; but to produce the Events, that is God's. So that all that we are concern'd in, in this great Scene of Providence, is to project, and design worthy and honest Things; to busie our selves in their Pursuit, by the Laws of Probity and Virtue, and then to submit the Issue to the great Arbitrator of all Things. We may indeed humbly present our Desires and Endeavours, and lay our Plan before him; but then it must be under that religious Frame of Mind, as always to be best pleas'd with that Lot, which he shall reach out to us, whether that be, to our present Apprehension, Good or Evil. If it be Good, to enjoy it with a liberal, grateful Heart, to the Honour of the Donor, and the Good of others. If Evil, to reason with our selves upon this turn of Providence, that however we may

unhappily have stray'd, before we were afflicted; we may nevertheless henceforward keep his Law.

Further, upon this Subject, entertain your Thoughts, I beseech you, with a due Sense of the Paternal Tenderness of God towards us; in that he has not expos'd our nice and frail Condition, either to the wild Confusions of Chance, or the Insults of evil Spirits, or the Malice of wicked Men; but has indulgently reserv'd the dispensing of Evils to his own gentle Hand. So that of all those innumerable Evils, our own Folly would otherwise occasion (which are most of the Evils of Life) no other in particular shall befall us, but what his provident Wisdom foresees proper, and most hopeful to cure those very Follies, which produc'd them. Under this Meditation, let us then adore the inconceivable Goodness of God. We ought indeed always to bless God for the *Good Things* of this Life; but infinitely more are we indebted to him for our *Evil Things*: these being his Choice, select Occurrences, suited and adapted to our particular Circumstances and Case. The good Things of this Life are our present Subsistence, our daily Bread, as it were; but these are Medicinal for our Eter-
nal

nal Health. It may be very unhappy, that we have been fortunate; it can scarce ever, it need never be other, than good, *that we have been afflicted.*

But this is a Consideration, which very few in this great Audience, seem to be concern'd in: Providence having open'd such a flowing Affluence of all good Things upon you, that it seems to have with-held no innocent *Joy from your Hearts.* But, I hope you consider, that God is but *proving you with Mirth*, and therefore the more Providence indulges you, so much the severer you are to your selves; so much the more dutiful, the more humble, before our God. And so long as Prosperity may be a Blessing to you, may you never taste of that which too great an Indulgence would make necessary to your Souls! May you have abundantly the more hereafter, for having had so much in this Life!

But then, in Justice, in Gratitude, in Modesty, you will reflect with great Humility, that it is God alone, by his Providence, that has distinguish'd you so vastly from the Commonalty of Mankind, both in external Affluence, and inward Endowments. For though
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there be many things of the most intrinsick Value, in which *the Rich and the Poor meet together, God being the Maker of us all*; yet are there also things innumerable relating to this Life, wherein you are highly Accommodated, Privileg'd, Dignify'd above them.

But then I say, it becomes you to reflect, who it was that cast this regard on your Estate, equally mean by Nature with the poorest Wretch, that waits for the *Crumbs under your Table*; and made you thus to differ from your Brother. Think upon, and apply that just Aphorism, that *Pride was not made for Man*: not for Man, because, of all the Beings of this Lower World, he alone is fall'n from what he once was; now subject to Vanity and Misery, from a thousand Accidents, to Folly and Repentance from himself. Pride, therefore, was not made for Man in any Capacity, much less for the Rich and the Great. For of all others it least becomes them, who are the greatest Receivers, the most indebted, the most depending, particularly subject to the greatest Wants, should God withdraw his indulging Hand but for one single Moment. Such in truth is the Condition of every Person suitable to the outward good things he has received at the
Hands

Hands of God ; the real Subject of great Humiliation, Affiance, and Gratitude to the Divine Providence.

Lastly, Be pleas'd to think very seriously, what it is that God may justly expect of you, and demand in return for all the good things he hath given you in your several orders so *richly to enjoy*. For these are of the nature of honorary Trusts, which, to an ingenuous Person, are the strictest Debts: Consider, that you are highly set in a Superior Sphere ; from whence only due Honour can be reflected back on the Divine Providence ; by your several Hands it is, that good is to be reacht out to the inferior World: the Rich are to minister to the Poor; the Wise to be Counsellours and Assistants to the Weak ; the Noble to cast the Beams of a gracious Condescending look on the Meek, and humble, and wretched, and effectually to cheer their Countenance. *He that is greatest amongst you, must, according to our Saviour's Rule, be as he that serveth for the good of all.* Every one of you in your Sphere should be the Blessing of God in the World.

But above all reflect, how it imports you to employ all your Faculties, Endowments Opportunities

tunities, to the promoting Piety and Virtue, and the suppressing Wickedness and Vice ; that one great Mark, Providence chiefly points at in all his Dispenfations. Hereby you will happily minister to our Lord and Master in the great work of Man's Salvation ; for which he suffer'd so much on Earth, and upon which he is still so intent in Heaven. And if ever it may be hopeful to retrieve the decay'd Manners of the Age ; now seems our happy Opportunity, Blessed be his Holy Providence for it ! and may our grateful Improvements under it, engage Heaven to continue it long a lasting Blessing to this Church and Nation ! Upon which Occasion be pleas'd deeply to reflect, that this present Juncture is the Great Crisis of our Affairs with God, so that if ever it can be made more than necessary to return to our Duty, now is it our utmost Obligation : we being under a formal Appeal to his Providence in the War we are engaged in. Our great Suit is now actually depending before his Tribunal ; our Liberties and those of *Europe*, our Religion, All, that is Dear and Sacred to us and our Posterity, depends upon the Issue, which God shall please to give to our present Cause. It is not, therefore, the Zeal or Power of our Allies abroad ; nor the Courage of our Armies in the Field ;

Field ; nor the Conduct or Bravery of our Generals at the head of them, no, nor that, which gives Life to these, the Wisdom of our Councils at Home, that we must entirely trust in, tho' these be all, in their several kinds, Providential Means, as Hopeful as our Heart can wish ; as great possibly, as any Age has known : yet, tho' we ought to bless God for these (as I hope we most Affectionately do) must we not however put our Confidence in them, because in truth, these are but in the nature and place of Advocates, to plead and set forth our Case ; these can have no manner of Influence with him, before whom we stand, beyond the real Merit and Equity of our Cause : the Issue of which is entirely in his Breast alone, who is the great Arbitrator and sole Judge of the World ; who will certainly do Right, and deliver his faithful People, that appeal to, and trust in him. But then if Wickedness be found universally in our Ways, especially if it abound in those Places, from whence Piety and Virtue should receive their Encouragement and Reward ; if moreover, we should, by mutual Provocations and Jealousies, at last ferment our selves into that impetuous, enrag'd, irreconcilable Temper (so opposite to the healing Genius of our Religion, so contrary to the

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Nature.

Nature of God's Infinite Condescension, Forbearance, Goodness) if Faith, Truth and Fidelity, Charity, Tenderness and mutual good Offices fail in our Land, (so that if it please God, that Wars should cease in all the World, this would not however give us Peace and Union and Security amongst ourselves,) if these, which God avert, should be the great Aggravations of our unhappy State; we cannot prosper in our Suit: We may indeed be honour'd so far, as to be Instruments under Providence of settling our Neighbours in Peace and Safety; because *this is God's Doing*, for his own Glory, and their Good: but yet if we reform not, we may justly be permitted to undo our selves, because this will be our own Act entirely, for our own Punishments.

Here then is the Province in which you all may be true Patriots to your Country; here is our never-failing Policy; this our one only wise Plan for our Affairs; not to place our Hopes purely in these Advantages, in which our Enemies would gladly place their Confidence; but in this, that we zealously endeavour to be more truly Religious, more in the Care and Favour of God, than they; and then we need not fear, tho' our Enemy were indeed the Universal Monarch.

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Permit me therefore, to close all with this general Exhortation, that in your several Stations, you would employ these great Advantages, God has bless'd and entrusted you with, to the promoting Piety and Virtue amongst us, to the binding up what Providence would heal, that you may be able to stand before God, with the Interest of eminent and publick Virtues, in this our present critical Exigence. Then shall we thankfully bless God for raising up such great Instruments of his good *Providence* towards us ; then shall all Ages to come bless your Memories ; then shall the Honours and the Affluence which you now enjoy, and shall employ to such worthy Purposes, make you transcend others more, *than one Star differeth now from another Star in Glory.*

May no Importunity, therefore, of any present Temptation, ever rob you and us of these Blessings ! May nothing ever debase any from so high an Order, sink any from so great a Height !

*Which may God of his Mercy grant, through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

F I N I S.



